

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

Efforts and Solutions Concerning Problems
Unique to Campus Communities and
Recommendation for Action

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Efforts and Solutions Concerning Problems Unique to Campus Communities and Recommendation for Action

Conducted on behalf of
Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Revitalization Program

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Executive Summary

Campus communities face many problems unique to their neighborhoods. Problems concerning housing, crime, unpleasant public space, underage and binge drinking, and decreasing economic vitality are the issues explored in this research. Possible solutions for these problems are proposed, based on a literature review of universities and communities throughout the United States. The following pages discuss how various universities and neighborhoods are taking action to reduce the degradation of the residential area surrounding campuses.

The goal of this research is to offer communities and universities a compilation of what programs, policies, and efforts exist to address common problems so that they can consider adopting them for their circumstances. Also, the research offers many websites to learn more about these programs, in the footnote section.

My objectives are to identify the issues unique to a neighborhood nestled closely to a university, describe programs and actions campus communities have initiated, study two universities that have strong partnerships with their community, and recommend action to Marcy-Holmes NRP for their Master Plan.

Introduction

"The winners in the competition for space will represent only a narrow segment of the many uses that together created success [of a district.] Whichever one or few uses have emerged as the most profitable in the locality will be repeated and repeated, crowding out and overwhelming less profitable forms of use... One or few dominating uses finally emerge triumphant. But the triumph is hollow. The most intricate and successful economic mutual support and social mutual support has been destroyed in the process."

Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, describes a district that is increasingly becoming less economically and socially diverse. Many of the neighborhoods surrounding university campuses in the United States are becoming these homogenous districts and losing the concept of mutual support. However, the recognition of this loss has sparked a wave of interest among universities and neighborhoods to acknowledge the value of these economic and social supports and to start a relationship that is based on mutuality and partnership.

For college neighborhoods, it is oftentimes difficult to create a balance of diversity in housing, business, and people. These neighborhoods have a majority of rental property, apartment buildings, bars, fast food restaurants, and, of course, students. Problems occur when permanent residents and students do not communicate with and respect each other, and the implications of this can be devastating to a neighborhood.

In the past ten years, universities, residents, neighborhood organizations, and the

Federal Government have realized the need for open communication, partnerships, and active problem solving within these communities. There has been a push to organize departments in the universities for community affairs. Neighborhoods have started organizing countless programs and have implemented policies addressing their concerns. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has opened a office for university partnerships (OUP) and given millions of dollars for campuses and communities to harness each other's resources. These partnerships have produced many effective tools for community development and research sources for neighborhoods.

Research Question

What programs and policies are neighborhoods and universities implementing to address the unique issues of a campus community?

Objectives

- 1) Identify the issues that are unique to a neighborhood nestled closely to a university.
- 2) Description of programs and actions the campus communities have initiated, either with or without the assistance of the university.
- 3) Study of two universities that have strong university-community ties and what they're doing to address their needs.
- 4) Recommendation to Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association and consultants for Master Plan.

Methods

- 1) Literature review and search
- 2) Internet search of neighborhood association websites, university pages, and their links
- 3) Interviews
- 4) Observations

Findings Part I

Problem: Housing

Housing in neighborhoods close to universities is increasingly becoming problematic. Rental housing is disproportional and absentee ownership presents an array of problems. Many absentee landlords have allowed their property to deteriorate, do not respond adequately to tenant or neighborhood complaints, do not enforce occupancy regulations, and generally do not make themselves accessible. In many college communities, a few landlords own many different properties in the area and are irresponsibly managing their properties. The diminishing housing available for ownership is creating a lack of affordable houses to buy, forcing faculty and staff of the universities to buy in other neighborhoods. The neighborhood also experiences problems with a lack of permanent, dedicated residents; it loses power to organize and make change within the community because few people live there more than four years.ⁱⁱ

Solutions

1) Promotion of Land Trusts

The Burlington Community Land Trust is a non-profit organization that promotes homeownership in areas of Burlington where it is not normally encouraged. By buying land and reselling it only to people who will live in it and take care of it, the Land Trust is ensuring the quality and longevity of that particular plot of land. Many other cities have been doing this to encourage homeownership in college neighborhoods. Neighborhoods near Pennsylvania State in Philadelphia and Duke in Durham have initiated similar community land trustsⁱⁱⁱ

2) Homeownership Incentives

Ohio State University offers down payment assistance grants to faculty and staff in order to allow their employees to more affordably live near work, at the same time, improving the quality of life in the surrounding communities. Through Campus Partners, a university-community partnership organization, these grants are made available with funding from HUD, and many local private and public funds. Similar incentives have been offered to employees at Duke in Durham, North Carolina as well.^{iv} Although this program is directly through the university, the community benefits greatly from their efforts and is encouraged to be part of the process.

3) Three unrelated persons ordinances

Designed to limit number of "roommates" that can live in a single family dwelling, these zoning ordinances have a big impact on the community surrounding universities. Most housing that is built for students, such as one bedroom apartments, is increasingly too expensive for many students, and they have been reverting to renting large, older houses and doubling, tripling, and quadrupling up. By lobbying to change the city zoning restrictions, neighborhoods can very markedly change the face of their neighborhoods. Although very hard to enforce, these "less than three unrelated persons" ordinances, in theory, prevent students from renting houses owned by a landlord. Many neighborhoods have successfully changed the zoning code for their community. Associations in Boulder, CO, Evanston, IL, and Stillwater, OK have successfully changed zoning and are starting to enforce it. Other college cities, such as Tempe, AZ, Topeka,

KS, Providence, RI, and several other communities have actively been trying to change the zoning. This issue is very controversial, as it creates dissonance with students, the university, and the neighborhood. Many cities have a student housing shortage already. Decreasing the number allowed in each residence worsens the shortage.

Problem: Crime

Many people, namely students, gather for parties in neighborhoods adjacent to universities. As a result, campus neighborhoods experience certain crimes in high proportion to other neighborhoods. Rioting, vandalism, rape, and assault are problematic to these areas. These crimes have been targeted by neighborhoods and addressed with programs specific to each of these crimes.

Solutions

1) Community policing and more local police involvement

Ohio State University in Columbus has decided that community policing is in their plans for a stronger university-community relationship. It is necessary to combine the efforts of the local and university police to start to solve the crime that happens on the street late at night. Police officers walk the streets at night, instead of driving, and there will be more directed in the neighborhoods near campus on Friday and Saturday nights.

2) Crime Watch

At the University of Alabama-Birmingham, the campus police have implemented a distinct and concerted relationship between the university, students, and the

neighborhood in an effort to reduce crime on and around campus. Even though their focus is on-campus crime, the effort to control this has had an effective on the surrounding neighborhoods. The Crime Watch program holds all students accountable for the responsibility of keeping a lookout for suspicious activity. Students, faculty, and neighborhood residents partner up, and walk through campus to record and report any behavior that is not safe.^v

3) Neighborhood Walk

Similar to Campus Watch, the Neighborhood Walk program instituted by residents, allows pairs to walk the streets and monitor suspicious behavior. Any misconduct including vandalism, litter, noise nuisance, or crime can be reported immediately to the local police department or the university police. Police departments and neighborhoods organizations must be in partnership with each other for this program to be successful.

Problem: Unpleasant Street life/Public Space

Perhaps the greatest cause for distrust between students and permanent residents, outdoor behavior is a serious problem for neighborhoods very close to universities. From campus celebrations, such as Homecoming, to nightly walks home from the bar, students and other partygoers disrupt the peace of the night with yelling, fighting, littering, and vandalizing. Similarly, many houses in these neighborhoods have students living there that have parties on a regular basis. The residents, obviously keeping different hours, feel their quality of life is disturbed, and have taken action to improve the circumstances.

Finally, expectations of yard maintenance and upkeep are not being met by many tenants in these neighborhoods, and residents have made many efforts to fix this gap in communication as well.

Solutions

1) Adopt-A-Block programs

Universities and neighborhoods across the US have started programs like Adopt-a-Block. By assigning a certain group of students and/or neighbors a block to keep clean, these programs are advocating communication and cooperation among *all* residents and, at the same time, keeping the neighborhood looking better. Depending on the campus, the program can be through the university student affairs or community service department or through the neighborhood organizations.

2) Increased collection

Many neighborhoods have also partnered with local refuse collectors to establish a more frequent collection of trash. This helps the problem of piled up garbage in driveways and alleys. Though this sometimes accrues added costs, funding may be available from other sources.^{vi}

3) Citizen Inspection Programs

One way a University of Minnesota neighborhood has taken control of the issue of unkempt yards is by initiating a citizen's inspection program. By enabling residents to

walk on the sidewalks and document any unsightly or unkempt conditions of neighbor's yards, the city of Minneapolis cut their inspections work. The neighbor organization was able to document, send a letter of complaint, demand a solution to the problem, and report a property to the city for further investigation if the problem was not attended to.

4) Civic Nuisance Adoption

Residents of Boulder Colorado have taken their complaints to legislature. Through toughening and adopting new civil nuisance laws, they have been able to report and convict repeat offenders of garbage problems, noise issues, and parking violations. University Hill has a website to help their residents know what steps to take if they are having problems with their neighbors. They have links to reporting a problem, and a list of other websites to contact for more information.^{vii}

5) Communication of Neighborly Standards

Many campuses as well as neighborhoods have realized that communication of neighborly expectations is necessary for change and peaceful coexistence. Students and residents in Peoria, Illinois have started Off-Campus Living forums, in order to bring students and permanent residents into problem solving discussions. A student Senate sponsored event, this body of students has made it a point to conducted a forum every month. After the open forum, the students and residents got into small groups and discussed concerns and voiced opinions.^{viii}

Problem: Underage and Excessive Drinking

This problem is at the root of many of the other problems campus communities face. House parties within the neighborhood end, and hundreds of underage and intoxicated students and their friends walk out onto the street. This causes disruption, and residents grow agitated with the noise, vandalism, and crime caused by excessive drinking. Universities and neighborhoods have tried many tactics to reduce over consumption. Some strategies have been more effective than others, and need to have defined enforcement mechanisms behind them to be effective.

Solutions

1) College Area Party Plan

Countless universities and neighborhoods have started CAPP programs, in an effort to curb excessive underage and binge drinking. Neighborhoods that adopt College Area Party Plans have identified noise, increased theft and property damage, and decreased appeal of public space as reasons for action. When neighborhoods request that a CAPP program is adopted by the City, they are asking the city to take an active role in addressing the special needs of college communities. Once a plan gets adopted, the city notifies problem (party) properties of the new policies and this residence immediately goes onto a CAPP list. The local police department then responds in a timely manner to any CAPP residence that gets called in as being disruptive and breaks up the party. The host of the party then is subject to arrest and confiscation of disruptive stereos or amplification. They also heavily monitor the area for parking violations and excessive litter.^{ix}

2) More social activities as alternatives to drinking

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill started on festival called Fall Fest, replacing the common pre-semester parties. This street festival encouraged students to participate in contests, and other activities that did not require alcohol. The incidences of alcohol related problems decreased drastically for this time period, as did the bar attendance.

3) Alcohol availability and access (Responsible Service Program)

Responsible Service of Beverages program (RSB) includes training of servers and bartenders and encouraging sober drivers. At Stanford University, these efforts have changed the drinking environment on campus, according to Pacific Institute research on underage drinking laws. More ID checks and a posted alcohol policy has helped reduce the acceptance to underage drinking on campus.^x

Problem: Decreasing Economic Vitality

Many business districts have become very unsuccessful in university neighborhoods. Because an increasing number of college students have cars, the need for walking distance stores has waned, leaving these once successful private businesses competing with nation-wide corporate chains in surrounding areas. There have been many attempts to increase the popularity of these mom-and-pop businesses that were once very successful. Also, an effort to make businesses more diverse has been attempted so that residents and students have more incentive to shop in their neighborhood.

Solutions

Marketing Efforts

In West Philadelphia, Penn State University and the surrounding communities have been working together to meet each other's needs concerning what retail and businesses need to be attracted to the college neighborhood. The neighborhood wrote a supplement to their plan, including suggestions for retail development, and the university responded with a variety of action teams comprised of faculty, staff, and students, to encourage specific retail and commercial development. The most notable marketing effort that the community and university have discussed and started is the "Buy West Philadelphia" campaign. According to Penn, after this aggressive campaign to encourage students to shop in the adjacent communities, Penn as a purchasing body, doubled their spending in West Philadelphia neighborhoods, increasing to \$50 million in 1997.^{xi}

Findings: Part II: Examples of Effective University-Community Partnerships

Ohio State University

Campus Partners was created in 1995 as an independent, non-profit community redevelopment corporation. It includes leaders in the neighborhood, government offices from the City of Columbus, students, and university faculty and administration. It includes many committees, designed to address certain aspects of Campus-Community life and relations. The Campus Partners Student Advisory Board sponsors public forums that allow students to express their desires and concerns about community developments

and improvements. All students of the Ohio State University are welcome to join the board. Within this organizations of students, there are many programs that students develop and participate in to help improve their community. These include Student Safety Initiative, a group helping to prevent neighborhood crime, BuckEyes Watch and Adopt-a-Street programs that focus on cleanup and maintenance of streets and sidewalks, and many other beautification and crime prevention tactics.^{xii}

The Campus Partners Safety Coordinating Committee is composed of local, statewide, and university law enforcement agencies, neighborhood and business organizations, and university offices and students.

Other committees include: a public service committee that works towards improvements in trash collection, and street-sweeping, a code enforcement task force, a education committee, and a campus collaborative, designed to develop programs with other universities for elementary and secondary school improvement.

Ohio State University and the University District neighborhoods experience many of the same problems other campus communities. The concern for a decreasing appeal to markets for students and residents, the loss of homeownership, the lack of safety, and the degradation of streets and housing closely resembles many of the issues the neighborhoods surrounding the University are working on.

Funded by a Community Outreach Partnership Center grant, Campus Partners was able to write and implement a detailed and aggressive plan concentrating on the University District. Ninety neighborhood organizations, government agencies, and university departments were included in this planning process. Because the University District in Columbus is so similar to other neighborhoods, insofar as they deal with

similar issues and have many of the same problems, a closer look at what Campus Partners has done will be helpful to them.

The University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan, written in 1996, included input from all stakeholders in the neighborhoods surrounding Ohio State University. The plan had six visions, and subsequently, four goals that would allow for an achievable plan. The visions were:

- 1) The University District shall be a model for University-community relationships;
- 2) The University District shall be a place of pride by maintaining buildings, and conserving and enhancing architectural quality and character;
- 3) The University District shall be culturally and socio-economically diverse;
- 4) The University District shall be a neighborhood of choice;
- 5) The University District shall demonstrate new leadership and investment to reverse the decline in retail and housing;
- 6) The University District shall accomplish its larger civic goals through active participation of community individuals and agencies.

Through this plan, Campus Partners was able to establish what issues were important and needed to be addressed, and at the same time, brought all stakeholders into the process of improvement. It is a good example of a partnership that has achieved many of its original goals.^{xiii}

University of Pennsylvania

The Center for Community Partnerships is one of the ways the University of Pennsylvania, (Penn) contributes to its neighborhood. Unlike Campus Partners, the Center is a program directly through Penn. The center has more of a community service approach; it's three assumptions are that Penn's future is intertwined with Philadelphia's, Penn can contribute greatly to improving quality of life, and can transmit knowledge by improving quality of life in Philadelphia. The Center's director, Ira Harkavy, has been very active speaking out on civically engaging campuses. The objectives of the Center are to:

- 1) Improve coordination and collaboration of university community service programs.
- 2) Create new and effective partnerships between the university and community.
- 3) Encourage new and creative initiatives linking Penn and the community.
- 4) Create and strengthen local, national, and international institutions of higher education committed to engagement with their local communities.

The Center projects in the community include university-assisted community schools, school reform, urban nutrition program, a community outreach partnership center, and a community arts partnership. Although the center is very public service oriented, it is actively and civically involved in the surrounding community.

Penn has a huge impact on the surrounding city and neighborhoods. Spruce Hill Community Association lays out how the university impacts the community and what it can do for it in its Community Renewal Plan. This plan says that Penn is the largest employer in the neighborhood, and it can serve as a vehicle for encouraging local private investment. The plan also says that Penn has many resources, expertise, and energy that can help the neighborhood with its problems such as physical improvements, retail development, public school improvement, student responsibility, and residential

development. If universities are concerned with attracting students and maintaining the surrounding areas, Spruce Hill Community Organization argues, the universities should be willing to do the following:

- 1) Establish capital improvements that include better lighting, maintenance, and attractive signage.
- 2) Improve landscape design.
- 3) Improve the mix of retail establishments and incentives for retail development.
- 4) Develop added parking space.
- 5) Help create charter public schools.
- 6) Better code enforcement of student properties.
- 7) Emphasize civic responsibility to students living in our neighborhoods.
- 8) Reduce on-campus rents.
- 9) Discourage students from bringing cars to campus.
- 10) Provide campus owned off campus housing.
- 11) Contribute to the acquisition, reconversion, and rehabilitation of housing for owned, rented, and college and faculty housing.

These can serve as a guideline to what other neighborhoods are doing and demanding from their nearby higher education institutions. This university-community relationship is good enough that the neighborhood can write a list of expectations and requests to the university, and work in partnership with them to make these requests a reality.

In response to these requests, Penn has been working to attract retail amenities to specific street corners. The 40th Street Action Team, a group of Penn administrators and staff have been working to enhance sidewalk lighting, paint buildings, repair sidewalks, plant trees, install awnings, and increase cleaning efforts.

The university also gave effort to attracting retail, and now a jewelry store, florist, a copy service, three clothing stores, and a bookstore are located in the neighborhood. Another university-guided effort, called Buy West Philadelphia has increased the student's expenditure in the neighborhood by twofold.^{xiv}

Conclusion: Recommendations for Master Plan

1) Create a strong, substantial, and permanent partnership with the University

Organize a coalition of students, faculty, staff, neighborhood residents, and leaders in the university and neighborhood to address issues of concern.

For examples of these coalitions, see a) Penn Faculty and Staff for Neighborhood Issues (PFSNI) at www.upenn.edu/pfsni/ or, b) Campus Partners at www.osu.edu/org/osucp/.

2) Use these partnerships to create committees around issues of concern

Committees will create more space for each individual to contribute to the issue that they care about. Also, more action can be taken when groups of people with a vested interest in their neighborhood focus on one aspect of change.

3) Develop of Plan of Action

Many successful neighborhood-university organizations have written a plan with each others' assistance. For examples of well organized, effective examples, see University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan at the Campus Partners website or the Boulder action plan at www.hillneighbors.com

4) To address the lack of homeownership:

Seek solutions for declining housing value and homeownership through implementing programs such as land trusts, incentives for faculty to invest in the neighborhood, and zoning restrictions.

5) To address the increasing crime rate:

By initiating neighborhood and campus watch programs, a presence of community will be felt on the streets, discouraging crimes like vandalism, theft, and assault. Also, these watch programs provide local police authorities with more support.

6) To address the unpleasant streetlife:

Create a sense of ownership of the streets by starting adopt-a-block programs with fraternities and other university organizations. Partner with the city to increase trash collection. Most importantly, keep open communication among residents of expectations and standards for the entire community.

7) To address underage and excessive drinking:

Encourage alternative activities to drinking, and sponsor alcohol-free events.

Create partnerships with the city to start CAPP programs.

8) To address declining economic vitality:

In partnership with the University, discuss and implement a marketing strategy to encourage students to patronize local businesses. Encourage student and resident oriented shops, such as bookstores, coffee shops, grocery stores, and pharmacies.^{xv}

ⁱ From Jane Jacobs book, at www.muohio.edu/karrows/

ⁱⁱ Found at www.muohio.edu under Bob Karrows research on college town issues.

ⁱⁱⁱ Found at www.muohio.edu under Bob Karrows research on college town issues.

^{iv} More information can be found at www.osu.edu by choosing the community programs selection in the menu.

^v From www.uab.edu

^{vi} For more information about increased trash collection of Boulder Colorado neighborhoods, see www.hillneighbors.com

^{vii} For more information on Boulder Colorado's civic nuisance laws, see www.hillneighbors.com.

^{viii} From www.buscout.com/ver2.0/98-10-30/news/forum/html. See this website for more information on the forum.

^{ix} From www.projecthands.com. For more information on CAPP, see list of references at this website under College Area Party Plan adoption.

^x From Pacific Institute's pamphlet on environmental strategies to prevention of alcohol problems on college campuses.

^{xi} See www.upenn.edu/president/westphilly/business.htm

^{xii} For more information on Student organizations that work to improve streets by way of crime prevention and beautification, see the Campus Partners committee website at www.osu.edu/org/osucp/

^{xiii} For a complete spread of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, see the Campus Partners website at www.osu.edu/org/osucp/plan/

^{xiv} For more information on Penn's contribution to retail development, see www.upenn.edu/president/westphilly/business.htm

^{xv} These recommendations are cited in Part One of the Findings section of this paper.